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Bush versus Carter?

NO CLEAR, accepted account has come of the six-hour session on Nov. 19 between Jimmy Carter and George Bush in Plains, Ga., but whatever happened is not good for the country.

Bush, at the instance of President Ford, had gone to Georgia to brief President-elect Carter on the nation's sensitive intelligence systems.

Columnists Evans and Novak, quoting an inside-Carter source, described the meeting as a "disaster" that ended with Carter coldly assuring Bush that a new Central Intelligence Agency Director would be named on Jan. 21 — one day after the inauguration.

BUT EQUALLY respected U.S. News and World Report reported that stories of a "stormy session" between the two had been discounted — that there was a "misunderstanding" that had been resolved after Bush refused to brief certain Carter aides on top-secret matters "because they had not yet received security clearance."

Less than a week later Bush gave seemingly unequivocal notice to Carter and President Ford that he would resign as CIA Director on Carter's Jan. 20th inauguration day.

It appeared from the timing and terseness of the three-sentence communication from Bush that it was more than the normal, "pleasure of the President" courtesy resignation.

If, indeed, "Jimmy just wasn't impressed with Bush" as the inside Carter source was quoted by columnists Evans and Novak, that is an unfortunate turn. And it collides with the impression Carter publicly gave that Bush had

done his job efficiently and well.

The United States has received solid service from the unusually qualified 52-year-old Texan. Many had hoped that the new President would find a highly responsible niche for Bush in a move to start binding an opinion-



FELIX
McKNIGHT

divided country with genuine bipartisan adhesive.

And they figured Bush would be a good place to start because of an impeccable service background.

Bush has said nothing of his visit with Carter. His words of resignation gave no clues. But of one thing Mr. Carter and his high riding aides can be certain — they will hear more of George Bush.

Not too many George Bushes are on the scene these days — the citizen-type with the clean hands, the keen intelligence and the fervor of undiluted, old-style love of country.

HE IS THE young man who twice almost wound up on the Republican ticket — with Richard Nixon and with Gerald Ford. He was considered "too young and inexperienced" when Nixon fatally opted for Spiro T. Agnew.

He was whiskered out of the place

next to Ford when Nelson Rockefeller was chosen for political reasons. He lost that one by inches.

AND THEN when recalled from China and given the interim appointment as director of the troubled and tarred CIA, he gave total assurance in U.S. Senate confirmation hearings that his mind would be solely on the restructuring of CIA — not politics.

That he did — and he did it well. He has quietly gone about the business of rebuilding confidence in the U.S. intelligence system. He promised at his swearing-in ceremony that "no politics, no policy bias" would color the collective judgment of CIA.

So, when he went to Georgia to fill in Carter on the critical background of foreign and domestic intelligence, it was felt that here was a man Carter would have on his team if he wanted to assure the country that everything isn't based upon partisan politics.

Only 52, strong family man, handsome, articulate and proven as Congressman, Ambassador to the United Nations, U.S. special liaison to the Republic of China and interim emergency director of CIA, Bush looked like choice bipartisan material for Carter.

But it didn't happen.

And it makes one wonder if Carter and old-line Democrats are not worried about the George Bush background — but his future.

It is conceivable, even highly possible, that the vigorous Republican loyalist could be his party's leader come 1980.

Maybe even squared off, head to head, against Jimmy Carter.